

[From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.]

A CHIP FROM A SAILOR'S LOG.

IT was a dead calm—not a breath of air—the sails flapped idly against the masts; the helm had lost its power, and the ship turned her head how and where she liked. The heat was intense,

so much so, that the chief mate had told the boatswain to keep the watch out of the sun; but the watch below found it too warm to sleep, and were tormented with thirst, which they could not gratify till the water was served out. They had drunk all the previous day's allowance; and now that their scuttle but was dry, there was nothing left for them but endurance. Some of the seamen had congregated on the top-gallant forecastle, where they gazed on the clear blue water with longing eyes.

"How cool and clear it looks," said a tall, powerful young seaman; "I don't think there are many sharks about: what do you say for a bath, lads?"

"That for the sharks!" burst almost simultaneously from the parched lips of the group: "we'll have a jolly good bath when the second mate goes in to dinner." In about half an hour the dinner-bell rang. The boatswain took charge of the deck; some twenty sailors were now stripped, except a pair of light duck trowsers; among the rest was a tall, powerful, coast-of-Africa nigger of the name of Leigh: they used to joke him, and call him Sambo.

"You no swim to-day, Ned?" said he, addressing me. "Feared of shark, heh? Shark nebber bite me. Suppose I meet shark in water, I swim after him—him run like debbel." I was tempted, and, like the rest, was soon ready. In quick succession we jumped off the spritsail yard, the black leading. We had scarcely been in the water five minutes, when some voice in-board cried out, "A shark! a shark!" In an instant every one of the swimmers came tumbling up the ship's sides, half mad with fright, the gallant black among the rest. It was a false alarm. We felt angry with ourselves for being frightened, angry with those who had frightened us, and furious with those who had laughed at us. In another moment we were all again in the water, the black and myself swimming some distance from the ship. For two successive voyages there had been a sort of rivalry between us: each fancied that he was the best swimmer, and we were now testing our speed.

"Well done, Ned!" cried some of the sailors from the forecastle. "Go it, Sambo!" cried some others. We were both straining our utmost, excited by the cheers of our respective partisans. Suddenly the voice of the boatswain was heard shouting, "A shark! a shark! Come back for God's sake!"

"Lay aft, and lower the cutter down," then came faintly on our ear. The race instantly ceased. As yet, we only half believed what we heard, our recent fright being still fresh in our memories.

"Swim, for God's sake!" cried the captain, who was now on deck; "he has not yet seen you. The boat, if possible, will get between you and him. Strike out, lads, for God's sake!" My heart stood still: I felt weaker than a child as I gazed with horror at the dorsal fin of a large shark on the starboard quarter. Though in the water, the perspiration dropped from me

like rain: the black was striking out like mad for the ship.

"Swim, Ned—swim!" cried several voices; "they never take black when they can get white."

I did swim, and that desperately: the water foamed past me. I soon breasted the black, but could not head him. We both strained every nerve to be first, for we each fancied the last man would be taken. Yet we scarcely seemed to move: the ship appeared as far as ever from us. We were both powerful swimmers, and both of us swam in the French way called *la brasse*, or hand over hand, in English. There was something the matter with the boat's falls, and they could not lower her.

"He sees you now!" was shouted; "he is after you!" Oh the agony of that moment! I thought of every thing at the same instant, at least so it seemed to me then. Scenes long forgotten rushed through my brain with the rapidity of lightning, yet in the midst of this I was striking out madly for the ship. Each moment I fancied I could feel the pilot-fish touching me, and I almost screamed with agony. We were now not ten yards from the ship: fifty ropes were thrown to us; but, as if by mutual instinct, we swam for the same.

"Hurra! they are saved!—they are alongside!" was shouted by the eager crew. We both grasped the rope at the same time: a slight struggle ensued: I had the highest hold. Regardless of every thing but my own safety, I placed my feet on the black's shoulders, scrambled up the side, and fell exhausted on the deck. The negro followed roaring with pain, for the shark had taken away part of his heel. Since then, I have never bathed at sea; nor, I believe, has Sambo been ever heard again to assert that he would swim after a shark if he met one in the water.